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MODERN LANGUAGE NOTES.

Baltimore, May, 1899.

UNDERSTAND, GUESS, THINK, MEAN, SEMASIOLOGICALLY EXPLAINED.

1. *G. verstehen* and *E. understand* have never been semasiologically explained. And yet the explanation is not far to seek. A term denoting insight, perception, understanding may primarily mean one of several things, the most common of which are: 'sharpness, keenness, acuteness;' 'grasping, comprehension;' 'separating, distinguishing.'

The last mentioned class is very numerous. Thus; Lat. *cernō* 'separate, sift: distinguish, discern,' *discernō* 'separate: discern,' Gk. *υπινω* 'separate: judge;' Lat. *distinguo* 'separate: distinguish;' *intelligō* ('choose between'): 'perceive, comprehend,' etc. So also in Germanic. Here the usual prefixes used in expressing separation are Goth. *fair-* 'for-,' OHG. *fir-*, etc.; OE. *tō-*, OS. *ti-*, OHG. *zir-*; OS. *undar-*, OE. *under-*, OHG. *untar-* 'inter-.'

In the sense 'between, apart,' OHG. *untar*, etc., are to be compared with Lat. *inter*, which is used in the same way, and further with Gk. *ἐντέρον*, Skt. *antara-m* 'entrails.' Lat. *inter*, Germ. *under* may both go back to **ǵtér-*, while Germ. *under* 'under' pre-supposes **ndhér-*. I do not find that it is generally recognized that we have here two distinct words. Kluge, *Et. Wb.* 5, and Brugmann, *Grd.* I, 2, 413, compare Skt. *ádharma-*, etc., while Schade, *Wb.*, refers to Lat. *inter*, etc. Paul, *DWb.* s. v. *unter*, admits the double origin. As a prefix OHG. *untar* is equivalent to 'inter-, between, apart' more often than to 'under;' and in NHG. *unter-* is not uncommon in the sense 'inter-.' In Eng. this *under-* is probably in *undertake*, cf. Fr. *entreprendre*. Finally, the same word is in ON. *undorn* 'mid-afternoon,' OE. *undern* 'forenoon,' OHG. *untorn* 'midday,' Goth. *undaurni-mats* 'breakfast.' Compare Lat. *inter*, *internus*. (Cf. Uhlenbeck, *Et. Wb.* s. v. *undaurnimats*.) It is also in OE. *under-wrēdel* 'waist-band' = 'middle-band.'

I call attention to the following parallels: OHG. *untarbrechan* = Lat. *interrumpo*; *unter-*

dringen = Lat. *interpello*, *interpono*; *untar-fāhan*, *untarneman* = *intercipio*; *untarfallan* = *intercido*; *untarlāzan* = *intermitto*; *untarquedan*, *untarsagēn* = *interdico*; *untarqueman* = *intervenio*; *untarweban* = *intertexto*; *untarbin-tan* = *interjungo*; *untarboto* = *interpres*, etc. This prefix in Lat. and in Germ., from the primary meaning 'between, middle,' came to denote separation. Hence in composition it is often equivalent to 'apart, off.'

In words expressing separation the meaning 'understand' may develop in two ways; 1. 'separate:' 'distinguish;' 2. 'separate, take away, take in;' 'perceive.' To the first class belong Lat. *cernō*, *distinguo*; to the second *intelligō*, *percipio*.

Of Germ. words which show this development may be mentioned (1): OHG. *untar-sceidan* 'divide, separate:' 'distinguish,' *untar-scidon* 'discern;' OE. *tō-dǣlan* 'divide, distribute:' 'discern, distinguish,' *tō-dāl* 'division, dispersion, dissension:' 'discretion;' *tō-scād* 'difference, diversity:' 'discrimination,' *tō-scādan* 'separate, disperse:' 'discern,' OHG. *za-sceidan* 'separate:' 'distinguish,' MHG. *ge-schide* 'gescheit;' OE. *tō-syndran* 'separate:' 'distinguish;' *tō-twæman* 'divide, separate, scatter:' 'discern;' OE. *clēofan* 'split, cleave:' E. *clever*, LG., Du. *kluftig* 'wise, clever' (cf. Kluge and Lutz, *Eng. Et.*); ON. *skilja* 'separate:' *skil* 'discernment,' E. *skill*.

To class 2. belong: OE. *under-gietan* ('get apart, take to oneself,' as *forgietan* 'forget' = 'lose'); 'understand, perceive,' *or-giete* ('able to be got out,' pre-Germ. **us-ghedjo-*): 'clearly perceivable, manifest,' *under-niman* 'take upon oneself, undertake:' 'take in, understand,' OHG. *fir-neman* 'take away, take to oneself:' 'perceive;' *cōosan* 'choose out, find out:' 'perceive, see.'

To these we can add OHG. *fir-stantan*, MHG. *ver-stān*, *-stēn* 'hinder from, intercept:' ('take to oneself') 'understand, perceive, notice,' OE. *for-standan* 'obstruct, intercept:' 'understand,' MHG. *under-stān* 'undertake, take upon oneself, seize, attain:' OE. *under-standan* 'take for granted, perceive, understand.' That these words came to mean 'perceive, understand' through 'intercept, take to oneself' admits of

but little doubt. This entirely explains their origin and use. Thus OE. *understandan* 'take for granted, assume' points plainly to this origin. Notice also such expressions as *einen Wink verstehen* 'take a hint,' *keinen Spass verstehen* 'not take a joke.' It will be seen that *under-* and *ver-* have the same force in this compound. So also they correspond in OE. *under-niman* 'take in, understand' and OHG. *fir-neman* 'perceive.' As for *stān, standan*, that in its transitive use means 'cause to stand, stop,' and consequently gives in this compound the meaning 'intercept, seize, take.' The further development is similar to *fir-neman*. Compare also the similar force of E. *undertake* and G. *sich unterstehen*. A reference to Gk. *ἐπισταται* in explaining *verstehen, understand* is futile, since, in any case, the Gk. word developed in meaning differently. That, if from the root *stā-* 'stand,' would give 'stand over, oversee, care for, give attention to,' hence 'perceive, know, understand.'

2. E. *guess*, ME. *gesse* is referred doubtfully by Kluge and Lutz, *Eng. Et.*, to a Germ. base **gōtisōn*. This seems quite probable. For we may derive the word from the root *ghed-* 'obtain, find, get:' Gk. *χαρδάνω*, Lat. *pre-hendō* 'hold,' Goth. *bi-gitan* 'find,' etc. The word is frequently used in expressing mental activity, and occurs in fact, in the sense 'guess.' So in Lat. *comprehendō, apprehendō*, OE. *under-gietan* 'understand,' *andgiet* 'intellect,' *or-giete* 'manifest,' *forgietan* 'forget,' ON. *geta* 'arrive at, suppose, conjecture,' *geta* 'supposition, guess,' *gāta* 'riddle,' O. Ch. Sl. *gadati* 'guess.'

3. Goth. *pagkjan* 'think,' *pugkjan* 'seem,' *þagks* 'thank' with their congeners in Germ. are compared with OLat. *tongeō* 'think,' Praenestine *tongitiō* 'opinion.' But this brings us no further, for we know no more about the word than before. A word is not explained until we find out the origin of its meaning. Now it is certain that a word expressing mental action cannot be original as such. *Think* must have had some other meaning; it must go back to some concrete term. The primary meaning of a word for 'think' might be 'revolve, reflect; weigh, ponder; measure, meditate; regard, contemplate; reckon, calculate; value, estimate; hold; touch upon;' or a hundred other possibilities.

Therefore, in looking for the etymon of *think* we need only discover a phonetically identical word from whose meaning 'think' might develop. Such a word we have in Lat. *tangō* 'reach, arrive at, come to; touch, take hold of, handle; affect, impress.' (On the ablaut of *tangō* cf. Brugmann, *Grd.* ii, 999.) From this certainly 'think' could develop. Compare ON. *geta* 'arrive at:' 'suppose,' Lat. *apprehendō, comprehendō; percipio; G. begreifen; E. grasp*, etc.

The root *te(n)g-* 'come to, reach' is probably related to *teq-* 'run' and *teng-* 'ausreichen, thrive:' Lith. *tekù* 'run,' Skt. *takti* 'hasten,' Av. *tax-ma* 'quick, strong,' Lith. *tānkus* 'compact,' *tenkù* 'reiche aus,' Goth. *þeihan* 'thrive,' etc. (Cf. Brugmann, *Grd.* I, 578-9.) The order of developed meanings would be: 'hasten, run; reach, come to; touch, take hold of, grasp,' etc. Compare also *teg-* 'take, get, begot' in OE. *þicgan* 'take, receive,' ON. *þiggja*, same, OHG. *dickan* 'implore,' primarily 'take hold of' (compare Goth. *ga-plaihan* 'fondle, caress,' MHG. *vlēhen* 'entreat'), Gk. *τίρω* 'beget, bear,' *τόκος* 'birth, child,' etc. Cf. Prellwitz, *Et. Wb.*; Schade, *Wb.* s.v. *digjan*.

With OHG. *dickan* compare OE. *þingian* 'intercede, plead, make terms with, speak,' *þingan* 'address,' OHG. *dingōn* 'plead a case, make a bargain, hire,' *ding* 'thing, meeting,' etc. Similarly Lat. *tangō* 'touch upon, treat of, handle, mention, discuss;' *petō* 'rush at:' 'beseech.'

For the development of meaning 'hasten:' 'reach, touch' compare OHG. *zillōn* 'hasten:' OS. *tilian* 'reach, acquire,' Gk. *πέτομαι* 'fly,' Lat. *petō* 'rush at:' 'fetch;' OHG. *funden* 'hasten;' *findan* 'find;' OE. *rāsan* 'rush, attack,' *ge-ris* 'fury;' *rīsan* 'seize.'

4. OHG. *meinen* 'meinen, denken, sagen, erklären,' OE. *mēnan* 'mean, allude to, intend, speak of, relate, complain of,' OCh. Sl. *menja, mēniti* 'meinen' cannot be directly compared with the root *men-* 'think,' if indeed they be related at all. They are rather from the root *mē-jo-, mē-* 'measure,' from which come the bases *moi-to-, moi-no-*. From the primitive root *mē-* 'measure' come similarly Lat. *meditor* 'meditate,' Gk. *μέδομαι* 'ponder, devise,' *μήδομαι* 'intend, resolve,' Goth. *mitōn* 'think.'

The root, in its simple form *mē-*, occurs in

Skt. *mā-ti*, *mī-mā-ti* 'measure,' and, in its enlarged form, *mē-ḥo-*, *mī-*, in *mī-mī-tē*, pass. *mī-yá-tē* 'measure, measure off, measure through, traverse, consider, compare; measure out, allot, assign to; prepare, form; show, prove,' *mita*- 'measured out, equivalent to; moderate, scanty, small; estimated.'

The p. p. *mita*- may, to be sure, be for **matō-*, but the meanings are what we are most concerned with now, and whether this particular form is from *mē-* or *mī-* is of little consequence. In any case a derivative of the root *mī-* would partake of its meanings and might be used in as many different senses as the parent word. It needs no proof to show that the base *moi-no-* in Germ. **mainjan* 'mean, think; tell, declare' may be a derivative of the root *mī-*, which in Skt. means 'measure, consider; show, prove.' The base *moi-no-* occurs also in Lat. *minus* < **moīnos*- 'gift, office, duty, service, favor,' primarily 'something measured out, allotted, an allotment, portion, share;' *com-mūnis* ('sharing together'), 'common,' Goth. *ga-mains* 'sharing, common,' OHG. *gimeini* 'gemeinsam, gemein,' *mein* 'false, deceitful,' Lith. *mainas* 'exchange.' (Cf. Uhlenbeck, *Et. Wb.* s. v. *gamains*; Brugmann, *Grd.* I, 185.)

These words are referred by Uhlenbeck to a root *mei-*, *moi-*, Skt. *máyati* 'exchange.' This, however, is the same root. Skt. *mī-* 'measure, measure out, compare' shows the original sense of 'exchange.' Similarly 'deceive' comes from 'compare, make like, imitate, counterfeit.' Compare also Skt. *mīmitē* 'measure, compare;' Gk. *μῖμεμαι* 'imitate,' *μῖμος* 'actor;' *mīmīte* 'measure off,' *mita* 'measured off, scanty, small;' *mināti* 'diminish, injure;' *mīmīlē* 'mete out, arrange, form, build;' *minōti* 'establish, build,' Lat. *moenia* 'walls,' *muniō* 'fortify.'

The base *mei-to-*, *moi-to-* occurs in Goth. *maidjan* 'change, corrupt,' ON. *meiða* 'injure,' Goth. *ga-maiþs* 'frail, feeble,' OS. *gi-mēd* OHG. *gi-meit* 'foolish,' OE. *ge-mād* 'foolish, mad,' Lat. *mūtō* 'change,' Gk. Sic. *μοῖρος* 'thanks, favor,' Goth. *maiþms*, OE. *māþum* 'gift,' etc. These words are connected by Uhlenbeck, *Et. Wb.*, and referred to the same root as in Goth. *ga-mains*, etc. To these I should add OHG. *mēta*, *miata*, OS. *mēda*, *mieda*, OFrs. *mēde*, *mīde*, OE. *mēd* 'reward, pay,' pre-Germ.

**mēitā-*. With this explanation they are, of course, to be separated from Goth. *mizdō*, OE. *meord*, Gk. *μισθός*, etc. At best the old comparison has never been satisfactorily explained, while this comparison explains itself.

Compare the development in meaning in the bases *mē-t-* and *mē-d-*: Gk. *μῆτις* 'wisdom, skill, craft; advice, plan,' Skt. *māti-* 'measure, insight,' Lat. *mētor* 'measure, distribute, traverse, estimate, consider,' *mētor* 'measure, traverse, lay out, erect,' OE. *māþ* 'measure, degree, proportion, share, rank, one's due, respect, efficacy, power, capacity;' *metan* 'measure, limit, compare, traverse,' OHG. *mezzan* 'measure, traverse, allot, give, form, compose, consider, estimate,' OE. *māte* 'insignificant, small, few, bad,' MHG. *māze* 'moderate,' *māzen* 'measure off, limit, diminish, make smaller, be moderate, refrain from, compare.' Cf. Prellwitz, *Et. Wb.* s. v. *μῆτις*, *μέδομαι*.

FRANCIS A. WOOD.

Cornell College.

GOETHE AND WORDSWORTH.

I wish to call attention to the parallelism between certain passages in Faust I, and Book iv of 'the Excursion' ('Despondency Corrected').

In 'Wald und Höhle,' which, in a position different from its present place in the poem, formed part of the 'Fragment' of 1790, Goethe's own religious nature inspires the panegyric raised by Faust to the 'Spirit Sublime,'

Erhabner Geist, du gabst mir, gabst mir alles,
Warum ich bat
Gabst mir die herrliche Natur zum Königreich,
Kraft, sie zu fühlen, zu genießen. Nicht
Kalt staunenden Besuch erlaubst du nur,
Vergönntest mir in ihre tiefe Brust
Wie in den Busen eines Freundes zu schauen.
Du führst die Reihe der Lebendigen
Vor mir vorbei, und lehrst mich meine Brüder
Im stillen Busch, in Luft und Wasser kennen.

These verses may be said to fore-shadow Goethe's evolutionary theories; their burden, however, is a nature-worshipping pantheism. There are not wanting, in German literature of the eighteenth century, veiled allusions to the universal brotherhood of all animate creatures, from the 'Irdisches Vergnügen' of Brockes to Herder's 'die Natur'; but it remained for Goethe clearly to voice this Buddhistic, rather than Christian, notion.

In Book iv of 'the Excursion' we read: